

Deuterocanonical and  
Cognate Literature  
Yearbook 2007



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Edited by

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Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York

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## Angels

*The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins,  
Development and Reception*

Edited by

Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, Karin Schöpflin

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## Preface

With a certain joy and at the same time somewhat hesitantly, the editors present this volume to all interested readers. The subject almost forced itself upon our minds, because nowadays people can come across angels in nearly every sphere of life, especially in the context of mastering difficulties. Almost daily there are new reports concerning the angelic world and effects attributed to angels. The range is wide – starting with disappointed members of the larger religious communities talking in chat shows or persons presenting their individual beliefs. But angels play an unexpectedly central role also in the monotheistic religions as well. But it is precisely this wide range of different “angelologies” which are influenced by sometimes abstruse or even dubious ideas. This led us to look back to the time when the concepts of angels were developed and to present the basic ideas in an extensive, but compact survey. We feel a certain reluctance because we could have dealt with further aspects of the subject, but had to refrain from these in order to save space. Therefore we appeal to the benevolence of the reader to take note of the meticulously provided contributions and to join in the further scholarly discussion.

It was already mentioned that we wish to offer an extensive survey. That is why, for a start, the volume presents articles dealing with the Ancient Near East (Egypt, Mesopotamia) and the Greco-Roman world. Moreover, central themes and passages of the Old Testament, in particular of the deuterocanonical and intertestamental literature resp. Second Temple literature (with a focus on the book of Tobit) and of the New Testament are discussed. In order to underline the relevance of the concepts and ideas as fundamental to later developments, the phase of the “rewritten Bible” as well as Jewish, Islamic and Christian reception history (art and religious practice) round off the volume.

The editors have thoroughly considered the problem of providing indices in this volume. They formed the opinion that in this case for once indices will not be prepared – not only because of the volume’s proportions (the wide range of subjects from Egypt to the Quran would require an extreme number of references), but also for another reason. The individual contributions are for the most part self-contained, so that as a rule the titles and subtitles sufficiently indicate the field that is dealt with. This also means that pertinent literature is accessible by way of the bibliographies and the footnotes of each article.

We give our warm thanks to the authors who made their expert knowledge available in this volume. We are extremely pleased that we have succeeded in gaining contributors from different Christian confessions as well as from the great monotheistic religions. So this work will also be a contribution to inter-religious and inter-confessional dialogue. It is no coincidence that within the scope of the investigations collected in this volume the overlap with regard to the Ancient Near Eastern and all the other religions, just on the level of angels and demons, is mentioned several times. In fact, this is true for the last 4000 years! Last but not least we express our gratitude to the authors because they have finished the proof-reading of the formatted articles very quickly.

Communication among the editors turned out to be pleasingly efficient. About a third of the contributions was assigned to each editor; in spite of this, or maybe even because of this, it was possible to present this *opus* in time.

This book would never have been published without a hardworking and competent staff. Besides the mutual exchange of editorial experience in this context, I especially want to point out the linguistic competence of Dr. Karin Schöpflin (Göttingen). Words cannot adequately describe her achievement, as she obligingly made much time available for this project. It might suffice to say that she translated about 25% of the articles and revised about 60% of the manuscripts with regard to English grammar. The skills of the editorial secretary Waltraud Winkler (gained through editing *Biblische Notizen*) were not merely helpful but indispensable. The editorial team expresses its recognition and thanks to her.

In an age when the courage to publish seems to abandon many publishing houses, the initiative to publish this series, especially the present extensive volume, is evidence of the publisher's wish to further academic studies, and also of far-sightedness – "*Was du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast, / Erwirb es, um es zu besitzen.*" (Goethe, *Faust* I). The publisher's activity may also serve to achieve clarity in a widely discussed topic of current interest. We, the editors, and the future readers want to express our sincere and profound gratitude to the de Gruyter Verlag (as the volume is published without any contributions to printing expenses) and especially to Dr. Albrecht Döhnert and his team. Such completely amicable cooperation encourages further activities.

For the editors

Friedrich V. Reiterer

Salzburg, September 2007